

Maddie's® Big Fix in Alabama

During Maddie's Big Fix:

- Shelters reported a 9% drop in euthanasia, or 5,449 fewer deaths over two years.
- Maddie's® Big Fix strengthened the bonds between veterinarians and the animal sheltering community.

The program led to the formation of animal welfare collaborations in many communities, several of which have subsequently received a Maddie's Fund grant.

ALVMA Executive Director Dr. Charles Franz provided outstanding leadership throughout the two year program. More than 700 veterinarians in 319 private practice hospitals in 61 counties participated, and a large number of the doctors promoted and advertised the Big Fix at their own expense. Many animal shelter Executive Directors were equally supportive, spending their resources to advertise the program. College students, volunteers and business people all pitched in to help.

Maddie's® Big Fix Breakdown:

13,278 dog spays	4,743 dog neuters
11,403 cat spays	6,622 cat neuters

The Foundation for Interdisciplinary Research and Education Promoting Animal Welfare (FIREPAW) analyzed the data from Maddie's® Big Fix. Below are a few key findings from their Report.

Number of surgeries:

The number of Maddie's® Big Fix surgeries performed over the total program period was 36,046.

Shelter intake trends:

Shelter intake decreased slightly in each program year. Adjusted total intake declined by 2.5%.

The decrease in intake over the two-year program occurred entirely at animal control and traditional shelters. Intake at no-kill organizations increased.

The increase at no-kill and the decrease at other shelters are probably related. When no-kill organizations are able to take in more animals, fewer people may end up taking their animals to other shelters. The intake increase at no-kill organizations can also be explained by a similar increase in no-kill adoptions, which frees up more space to take in animals.

If spay/neuter programs have an effect, this should come through a reduction in shelter intake which then results in reduced deaths. A vigorous effort was made to find a relationship between spay/neuter level and intake by region. No significant relationship was found.

The fact that no statistically significant relationship between spay/neuter and intake was found does not necessarily mean that spay/neuter was ineffective. Spay/neuter efforts might simply require more time to show an effect.

The lack of a statistical relationship in Alabama is consistent with results from other programs. Spay/neuter programs may be too subtle or long-term in impact to have a demonstrable effect at this level of analysis.

Deaths:

Total deaths decreased by 9% over the program period.

The decline in intake was the largest identifiable contributor to the decrease in deaths. Rising adoptions also contributed somewhat. That said, much of the decrease in deaths remains unaccounted for due to a statistical discrepancy.

Adoptions:

Increasing adoption was not a focus for Maddie's® Big Fix. But, over the program period, adoptions increased by 3.5%.

The increase in adoptions may have come from Big Fix surgeries. Family members, friends and neighbors who otherwise may have adopted puppies and kittens from unplanned litters might have instead adopted from a shelter as litters became scarce.